

CHAPTER XIII

MOSES MAIMONIDES

Maimon, Rambam = R. Moses, the son of Maimon, Maimonides.—His *Yad Hachazaka* and *Moreh Nebuchim*.—Gersonides.—Crescas.—Albo.

THE greatest Jew of the Middle Ages, Moses, the son of Maimon, was born in Cordova, in 1135, and died in Fostat in 1204. His father Maimon was himself an accomplished scientist and an enlightened thinker, and the son was trained in the many arts and sciences then included in a liberal education. When Moses was thirteen years old, Cordova fell into the hands of the Almohades, a sect of Mohammedans, whose creed was as pure as their conduct was fanatical. Jews and Christians were forced to choose conversion to Islam, exile, or death. Maimon fled with his family, and, after an interval of troubled wanderings and painful priva-

tions, they settled in Fez, where they found the Almohades equally powerful and equally vindictive. Maimon and his son were compelled to assume the outward garb of Mohammedanism for a period of five years. From Fez the family emigrated in 1165 to Palestine, and, after a long period of anxiety, Moses Maimonides settled in Egypt, in Fostat, or Old Cairo.

In Egypt, another son of Maimon, David, traded in precious stones, and supported his learned brother. When David was lost at sea, Maimonides earned a living as a physician. His whole day was occupied in his profession, yet he contrived to work at his books during the greater part of the night. His minor works would alone have brought their author fame. His first great work was completed in 1168. It was a Commentary on the Mishnah, and was written in Arabic. But Maimonides' reputation rests mainly on two books, the one written for the many, the

other for the few. The former is his "Strong Hand" (*Yad Hachazaka*), the latter his "Guide of the Perplexed" (*Moreh Nebuchim*).

The "Strong Hand" was a gigantic undertaking. In its fourteen books Maimonides presented a clearly-arranged and clearly-worded summary of the Rabbinical Halachah, or Law. In one sense it is an encyclopedia, but it is an encyclopedia written with style. For its power to grapple with vast materials, this code has few rivals and no superiors in other literatures. Maimonides completed its compilation in 1180, having spent ten years over it. During the whole of that time, he was not only a popular doctor, but also official Rabbi of Cairo. He received no salary from the community, for he said, "Better one penny earned by the work of one's hands, than all the revenues of the Prince of the Captivity, if derived from fees for teaching or acting as Rabbi." The "Strong Hand," called also

“Deuteronomy” (*Mishneh Torah*), sealed the reputation of Maimonides for all time. Maimonides was indeed attacked, first, because he asserted that his work was intended to make a study of the Talmud less necessary, and secondly, because he gave no authorities for his statements, but decided for himself which Talmudical opinions to accept, which to reject. But the severest scrutiny found few real blemishes and fewer actual mistakes. “From Moses to Moses there arose none like Moses,” was a saying that expressed the general reverence for Maimonides. Copies of the book were made everywhere; the Jewish mind became absorbed in it; his fame and his name “rang from Spain to India, from the sources of the Tigris to South Arabia.” Eulogies were showered on him from all parts of the earth. And no praise can say more for this marvellous man than the fact that the incense burned at his shrine did not intoxicate him. His touch became

firmer, his step more resolute. But he went on his way as before, living simply and laboring incessantly, unmoved by the thunders of applause, unaffected by the feebler echoes of calumny. He corresponded with his brethren far and near, answered questions as Rabbi, explained passages in his Commentary on the Mishnah or his other writings, entered heartily into the controversies of the day, discussed the claims of a new aspirant to the dignity of Messiah, encouraged the weaker brethren who fell under disfavor because they had been compelled to become pretended converts to Islam, showed common-sense and strong intellectual grasp in every line he wrote, and combined in his dealings with all questions the rarely associated qualities, toleration and devotion to the truth.

Yet he felt that his life's work was still incomplete. He loved truth, but truth for him had two aspects: there was truth as revealed by God, there was truth which

God left man to discover for himself. In the mind of Maimonides, Moses and Aristotle occupied pedestals side by side. In the "Strong Hand," he had codified and given orderly arrangement to Judaism as revealed in Bible and tradition; he would now examine its relations to reason, would compare its results with the data of philosophy. This he did in his "Guide of the Perplexed" (*Moreh Nebuchim*). Maimonides here differed fundamentally from his immediate predecessors. Jehuda Halevi, in his *Cuzari*, was poet more than philosopher. The *Cuzari* was a dialogue based on the three principles, that God is revealed in history, that Jerusalem is the centre of the world, and that Israel is to the nations as the heart to the limbs. Jehuda Halevi supported these ideas with arguments deduced from the philosophy of his day, he used reason as the handmaid of theology. Maimonides, however, like Saadiah, recognized a higher function for reason. He placed rea-

son on the same level as revelation, and then demonstrated that his faith and his reason taught identical truths. His work, the "Guide of the Perplexed," written in Arabic in about the year 1190, is based, on the one hand, on the Aristotelian system as expounded by Arabian thinkers, and, on the other hand, on a firm belief in Scripture and tradition. With a masterly hand, Maimonides summarized the teachings of Aristotle and the doctrines of Moses and the Rabbis. Between these two independent bodies of truths he found, not contradiction, but agreement, and he reconciled them in a way that satisfied so many minds that the "Guide" was translated into Hebrew twice during his life-time, and was studied by Mohammedans and by Christians such as Thomas Aquinas. With general readers, the third part was the most popular. In this part Maimonides offered rational explanations of the ceremonial and legislative details of the Bible.

For a long time after the death of Maimonides, which took place in 1204, Jewish thought found in the "Guide" a strong attraction or a violent repulsion. Commentaries on the *Moreh*, or "Guide," multiplied apace. Among the most original of the philosophical successors of Maimonides there were few Jews but were greatly influenced by him. Even the famous author of "The Wars of the Lord," Ralbag, Levi, the son of Gershon (Gersonides), who was born in 1288, and died in 1344, was more or less at the same stand-point as Maimonides. On the other hand, Chasdai Crescas, in his "Light of God," written between 1405 and 1410, made a determined attack on Aristotle, and dealt a serious blow at Maimonides. Crescas' work influenced the thought of Spinoza, who was also a close student of Maimonides. A pupil of Crescas, Joseph Albo (1380-1444) was likewise a critic of Maimonides. Albo's treatise, "The Book of Principles" (*Ikkarim*), be-

came a popular text-book. It was impossible that the reconciliation of Aristotle and Moses should continue to satisfy Jewish readers, when Aristotle had been dethroned from his position of dictator in European thought. But the "Guide" of Maimonides was a great achievement for its spirit more than for its contents. If it inevitably became obsolete as a system of theology, it permanently acted as an antidote to the mysticism which in the thirteenth century began to gain a hold on Judaism, and which, but for Maimonides, might have completely undermined the beliefs of the Synagogue. Maimonides remained the exemplar of reasoning faith long after his particular form of reasoning had become unacceptable to the faithful.

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CHAPTER XIV

THE DIFFUSION OF SCIENCE

Provençal Translators.—The Ibn Tibbons.—Italian Translators.—Jacob Anatoli.—Kalonymos.—Scientific Literature.

TRANSLATORS act as mediators between various peoples and ages. They bring the books and ideas of one form of civilization to the minds and hearts of another. In the Middle Ages translations were of more importance than now, since fewer educated people could read foreign languages.

No men of letters were more active than the Jews in this work of diffusion. Dr. Steinschneider fills 1100 large pages with an account of the translations made by Jews in the Middle Ages. Jews co-operated with Mohammedans in making translations from the Greek, as later on they

were associated with Christians in making Latin translations of the masterpieces of Greek literature. Most of the Jewish translations, however, that influenced Europe were made from the Arabic into the Hebrew. But though the language of these translations was mostly Hebrew, they were serviceable to others besides Jews. For the Hebrew versions were often only a stage in a longer journey. Sometimes by Jews directly, sometimes by Christian scholars acting in conjunction with Jews, these Hebrew versions were turned into Latin, which most scholars understood, and from the Latin further translations were made into the every-day languages of Europe.

The works so translated were chiefly the scientific and philosophical masterpieces of the Greeks and Arabs. Poetry and history were less frequently the subject of translation, but, as will be seen later on, the spread of the fables of Greece and of

the folk-tales of India owed something to Hebrew translators and editors.

Provence was a meeting-place for Arab science and Jewish learning in the Middle Ages, and it was there that the translating impulse of the Jews first showed itself strongly. By the beginning of the thirteenth century, Hebrew translation had become an art. True, these Hebrew versions possess no graces of style, but they rank among the best of their class for fidelity to their originals. Jewish patrons encouraged the translators by material and moral support. Thus, Meshullam of Lunel (twelfth century) was both learned and wealthy, and his eager encouragement of Judah Ibn Tibbon, "the father of Jewish translators," gave a strong impetus to the translating activity of the Jews.

Judah Ibn Tibbon (about 1120-1190) was of Spanish origin, but he emigrated from Granada to Provence during the same persecution that drove Maimonides from

his native land. Judah settled in Lunel, and his skill as a physician won him such renown that his medical services were sought by knights and bishops even from across the sea. Judah Ibn Tibbon was a student of science and philosophy. He early qualified himself as a translator by careful attention to philological niceties. Under the inspiration of Meshullam, he spent the years 1161 to 1186 in making a series of translations from Arabic into Hebrew. His translations were difficult and forced in style, but he had no ready-made language at his command. He had to create a new Hebrew. Classical Hebrew was naturally destitute of the technical terms of philosophy, and Ibn Tibbon invented expressions modelled on the Greek and the Arabic. He made Hebrew once more a living language by extending its vocabulary and adapting its idioms to the requirements of mediæval culture.

His son Samuel (1160-1230) and his

grandson Moses continued the line of faithful but inelegant translators. Judah had turned into Hebrew the works of Bachya, Ibn Gebirol, Jehuda Halevi, Ibn Janach, and Saadiah. Samuel was the translator of Maimonides, and bore a brave part in the defence of his master in the bitter controversies which arose as to the lawfulness and profit of studying philosophy. The translations of the Tibbon family were in the first instance intended for Jewish readers only, but later on the Tibbonite versions were turned into Latin by Buxtorf and others. Another Latin translation of Maimonides existed as early as the thirteenth century.

Of the successors of the Tibbons, Jacob Anatoli (1238) was the first to translate any portion of Averroes into any language. Averroes was an Arab thinker of supreme importance in the Middle Ages, for through his writings Europe was acquainted with Aristotle. Renan asserts that all the early students of Averroes were

Jews. Anatoli, a son-in-law of Samuel Ibn Tibbon, was invited by Emperor Frederick II to leave Provence and settle in Naples. To allow Anatoli full leisure for making translations, Frederick granted him an annual income. Anatoli was a friend of the Christian Michael Scot, and the latter made Latin renderings from the former's Hebrew translations. In this way Christian Europe was made familiar with Aristotle as interpreted by Averroes (Ibn Roshd). Much later, the Jew Abraham de Balmes (1523) translated Averroes directly from Arabic into Latin. In the early part of the fourteenth century, Kalonymos, the son of Kalonymos, of Arles (born 1287), translated various works into Latin.

From the thirteenth century onwards, Jews were industrious translators of all the important masterpieces of scientific and philosophical literature. Their zeal included the works of the Greek astronomers and mathematicians, Ptolemy, Euclid,

Archimedes, and many others. Alfonso X commissioned several Jews to co-operate with the royal secretaries in making new renderings of older Arabic works on astronomy. Long before this, in 959, the monk Nicholas joined the Jew Chasdai in translating Dioscorides. Most of the Jewish translators were, however, not Spaniards, but Provençals and Italians. It is to them that we owe the Hebrew translations of Galen and Hippocrates, on which Latin versions were based.

The preceding details, mere drops from an ocean of similar facts, show that the Jews were the mediators between Mohammedan and Christian learning in the Middle Ages. According to Lecky, "the Jews were the chief interpreters to Western Europe of Arabian learning." When it is remembered that Arabian learning for a long time included the Greek, it will be seen that Lecky ascribes to Jewish translators a rôle of the first importance in the

history of science. Roger Bacon (1214-1294) had long before said a similar thing: "Michael Scot claimed the merit of numerous translations. But it is certain that a Jew labored at them more than he did. And so with the rest."

In what precedes, nothing has been said of the *original* contributions made by Jewish authors to scientific literature. Jews were active in original research especially in astronomy, medicine, and mathematics. Many Jewish writers famous as philosophers, Talmudists, or poets, were also men of science. There are numerous Jewish works on the calendar, on astronomical instruments and tables, on mathematics, on medicine, and natural history. Some of their writers share the medieval belief in astrology and magic. But it is noteworthy that Abraham Ibn Ezra doubted the common belief in demons, while Maimonides described astrology as "that error called a science." These subjects, however, are too

technical for fuller treatment in the present book. More will be found in the works cited below.

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CHAPTER XV

THE DIFFUSION OF FOLK-TALES

Barlaam and Joshaphat.—The Fables of Bidpai.—
Abraham Ibn Chisdai.—Berachya ha-Nakdan.—
Joseph Zabara.

THE folk-tales of India were communicated to Europe in two ways. First, there was an oral diffusion. In friendly conversation round the family hearth, in the convivial intercourse of the tavern and divan, the wit and wisdom of the East found a home in the West. Having few opportunities of coming into close relations with Christian society, the Jews had only a small share in the oral diffusion of folk-tales. But there was another means of diffusion, namely, by books. By their writings the Jews were able to leave some impress on the popular literature of Europe.

This they did by their translations. Sometimes the Jews translated fables and

folk-tales solely for their own use, and in such cases the translations did not leave the Hebrew form into which they were cast. A good example of this was Abraham Ibn Chisdai's "Prince and Nazirite," compiled in the beginning of the thirteenth century. It was a Hebrew version of the legend of Buddha, known as "Barlaam and Josphat." In this the story is told of a prince's conversion to the ascetic life. His father had vainly sought to hold him firm to a life of pleasure by isolating him in a beautiful palace, far from the haunts of man, so that he might never know that such things as evil, misery, and death existed. Of course the plan failed, the prince discovered the things hidden from him, and he became converted to the life of self-denial and renunciation associated with the saintly teaching of Buddha. This story is the frame into which a number of charming tales are set, which have found their way into the popular literature of all the

world. But in this spread of the Indian stories, the book of Abraham Ibn Chisdai had no part.

Far other it was with the Hebrew translation of the famous Fables of Bidpai, known in Hebrew as *Kalila ve-Dimna*. These fables, like those contained in the "Prince and Nazirite," were Indian, and were in fact birth-stories of Buddha. They were connected by means of a frame, or central plot. A large part of the popular tales of the Middle Ages can be traced to the Fables of Bidpai, and here the Jews exerted important influence. Some authorities even hold that these Fables of Bidpai were brought to Spain directly from India by Jews. This is doubtful, but it is certain that the spread of the Fables was due to Jewish activity. A Jew translated them into Hebrew, and this Hebrew was turned into Latin by the Italian John of Capua, a Jew by birth, in the year 1270. Moreover, the Old Spanish version which

was made in 1251 probably was also the work of the Jewish school of translators established in Toledo by Alfonso. The Greek version, which was earlier still, and dates from 1080, was equally the work of a Jew. Thus, as Mr. Joseph Jacobs has shown, this curious collection of fables, which influenced Europe more perhaps than any book except the Bible, started as a Buddhistic work, and passed over to the Mohammedans and Christians chiefly through the mediation of Jews.

Another interesting collection of fables was made by Berachya ha-Nakdan (the Punctuator, or Grammarian). He lived in England in the twelfth century, or according to another opinion he dwelt in France a century later. His collection of 107 "Fox Fables" won wide popularity, for their wit and point combined with their apt use of Biblical phrases to please the medieval taste. The fables in this collection are all old, many of them being

Æsop's, but it is very possible that the first knowledge of Æsop gained in England was derived from a Latin translation of Berachya.

Of greater poetical merit was Joseph Zabar's "Book of Delight," written in about the year 1200 in Spain. In this poetical romance a large number of ancient fables and tales are collected, but they are thrown into a frame-work which is partially original. One night he, the author, lay at rest after much toil, when a giant appeared before him, and bade him rise. Joseph hastily obeyed, and by the light of the lamp which the giant carried partook of a fine banquet which his visitor spread for him. Enan, for such was the giant's name, offered to take Joseph to another land, pleasant as a garden, where all men were loving, all men wise. But Joseph refused, and told Enan fable after fable, about leopards, foxes, and lions, all proving that it was best for a man to remain where he was and

not travel to foreign places. But Enan coaxes Joseph to go with him, and as they ride on, they tell one another a very long series of excellent tales, and exchange many witty remarks and anecdotes. When at last they reach Enan's city, Joseph discovers that his guide is a demon. In the end, Joseph breaks away from him, and returns home to Barcelona. Now, it is very remarkable that this collection of tales, written in exquisite Hebrew, closely resembles the other collections in which Europe delighted later on. It is hard to believe that Zabara's work had no influence in spreading these tales. At all events, Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans, all read and enjoyed the same stories, all laughed at the same jokes. "It is," says Mr. Jacobs, "one of those touches of nature which make the whole world kin. These folk-tales form a bond, not alone between the ages, but between many races who think they have nothing in com-

mon. We have the highest authority that 'out of the mouths of babes and sucklings has the Lord established strength,' and surely of all the influences for good in the world, none is comparable to the lily souls of little children. That Jews, by their diffusion of folk-tales, have furnished so large an amount of material to the childish imagination of the civilized world is, to my mind, no slight thing for Jews to be proud of. It is one of the conceptions that make real to us the idea of the Brotherhood of Man, which, in Jewish minds, is forever associated with the Fatherhood of God."

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CHAPTER XVI

MOSES NACHMANIDES

French and Spanish Talmudists.—The Tossafists, Asher of Speyer, Tam, Isaac of Dompierre, Baruch of Ratisbon, Perez of Corbeil.—Nachmanides' Commentary on the Pentateuch.—Public controversies between Jews and Christians.

NACHMANIDES was one of the earliest writers to effect a reconciliation between the French and the Spanish schools of Jewish literature. On the one side, his Spanish birth and training made him a friend of the widest culture; on the other, he was possessed of the French devotion to the Talmud. Moses, the son of Nachman (Nachmanides, Ramban, 1195-1270), Spaniard though he was, says, "The French Rabbis have won most Jews to their view. They are our masters in Talmud, and to them we must go for instruction." From the eleventh to the fourteenth century, a French school of

Talmudists occupied themselves with the elucidation of the Talmud, and from the "Additions" (*Tossafoth*) which they compiled they are known as Tossafists. The Tossafists were animated with an altogether different spirit from that of the Spanish writers on the Talmud. But though their method is very involved and over-ingenious, they display so much mastery of the Talmud, such excellent discrimination, and so keen a critical insight, that they well earned the fame they have enjoyed. The earliest Tossafists were the family and pupils of Rashi, but the method spread from Northern France to Provence, and thence to Spain. The most famous Tossafists were Isaac, the son of Asher of Speyer (end of the eleventh century); Tam of Rameru (Rashi's grandson); Isaac the Elder of Dompaire (Tam's nephew); Baruch of Ratisbon; and Perez of Corbeil.

Nachmanides' admiration for the French method—a method by no means restricted

to the Tossafists—did not blind him to its defects. “They try to force an elephant through the eye of a needle,” he sarcastically said of some of the French casuists. Nachmanides thus possessed some of the independence characteristic of the Spanish Jews. He also shared the poetic spirit of Spain, and his hymn for the Day of Atonement is one of the finest products of the new-Hebrew muse. The last stanzas run thus:

Thine is the love, O God, and thine the grace,
That holds the sinner in its mild embrace;
Thine the forgiveness, bridging o’er the space
’Twixt man’s works and the task set by the King.

Unheeding all my sins, I cling to thee!
I know that mercy shall thy footstool be:
Before I call, O do thou answer me,
For nothing dare I claim of thee, my King!

O thou, who makest guilt to disappear,
My help, my hope, my rock, I will not fear;
Though thou the body hold in dungeon drear,
The soul has found the palace of the King!

Everything that Nachmanides wrote is warm with tender love. He was an enthu-

siast in many directions. His heart went out to the French Talmudists, yet he cherished so genuine an affection for Maimonides that he defended him with spirit against his detractors. Gentle by nature, he broke forth into fiery indignation against the French critics of Maimonides. At the same time his tender soul was attracted by the emotionalism of the Kabbala, or mystical view of life, a view equally opposed to the views of Maimonides and of the French school. He tried to act the part of reconciler, but his intellect, strong as it was, was too much at the mercy of his emotions for him to win a commanding place in the controversies of his time.

For a moment we may turn aside from his books to the incidents of his life. Like Maimonides, he was a physician by profession and a Rabbi by way of leisure. The most momentous incident in his career in Barcelona was his involuntary participation in a public dispute with a convert

from the Synagogue. Pablo Christiani burned with the desire to convert the Jews *en masse* to Christianity, and in 1263 he induced King Jayme I of Aragon to summon Nachmanides to a controversy on the truth of Christianity. Nachmanides complied with the royal command most reluctantly. He felt that the process of rousing theological animosity by a public discussion could only end in a religious persecution. However, he had no alternative but to assent. He stipulated for complete freedom of speech. This was granted, but when Nachmanides published his version of the discussion, the Dominicans were incensed. True, the special commission appointed to examine the charge of blasphemy brought against Nachmanides reported that he had merely availed himself of the right of free speech which had been guaranteed to him. He was nevertheless sentenced to exile, and his pamphlet was burnt. Nachmanides was seventy years of

age at the time. He settled in Palestine, where he died in about 1270, amid a band of devoted friends and disciples, who did not, however, reconcile him to the separation from his Spanish home. "I left my family," he wrote, "I forsook my house. There, with my sons and daughters, the sweet, dear children whom I brought up on my knees, I left also my soul. My heart and my eyes will dwell with them forever."

The Halachic, or Talmudical, works of Nachmanides have already been mentioned. His homiletical, or exegetical, writings are of more literary importance. In "The Sacred Letter" he contended that man's earthly nature is divine no less than his soul, and he vindicates the "flesh" from the attacks made on human character by certain forms of Christianity. The body, according to Nachmanides, is, with all its functions, the work of God, and therefore perfect. "It is only sin and neglect that disfigure God's creatures." In another of

his books, "The Law of Man," Nachmanides writes of suffering and death. He offers an antidote to pessimism, for he boldly asserts that pain and suffering in themselves are "a service of God, leading man to ponder on his end and reflect about his destiny." Nachmanides believed in the bodily resurrection, but held that the soul was in a special sense a direct emanation from God. He was not a philosopher strictly so-called; he was a mystic more than a thinker, one to whom God was an intuition, not a concept of reason.

The greatest work of Nachmanides was his "Commentary on the Pentateuch." He reveals his whole character in it. In composing his work he had, he tells us, three motives, an intellectual, a theological, and an emotional motive. First, he would "satisfy the minds of students, and draw their heart out by a critical examination of the text." His exposition is, indeed, based on true philology and on deep

and original study of the Bible. His style is peculiarly attractive, and had he been content to offer a plain commentary, his work would have ranked among the best. But he had other desires besides giving a simple explanation of the text. He had, secondly, a theological motive, to justify God and discover in the words of Scripture a hidden meaning. In the Biblical narratives, Nachmanides sees *types* of the history of man. Thus, the account of the six days of creation is turned into a prophecy of the events which would occur during the next six thousand years, and the seventh day is a type of the millennium. So, too, Nachmanides finds symbolical senses in Scriptural texts, "for, in the Torah, are hidden every wonder and every mystery, and in her treasures is sealed every beauty of wisdom." Finally, Nachmanides wrote, not only for educational and theological ends, but also for edification. His third purpose was "to bring

peace to the minds of students (laboring under persecution and trouble), when they read the portion of the Pentateuch on Sabbaths and festivals, and to attract their hearts by simple explanations and sweet words." His own enthusiastic and loving temperament speaks in this part of his commentary. It is true, as Graetz says, that Nachmanides exercised more influence on his contemporaries and on succeeding ages by his personality than by his writings. But it must be added that the writings of Nachmanides are his personality.

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CHAPTER XVII

THE ZOHAR AND LATER MYSTICISM

Kabbala.—The Bahir.—Abulafia.—Moses of Leon.—
The Zohar.—Isaac Lurya.—Isaiah Hurwitz.—
Christian Kabbalists.—The Chassidim.

MYSTICISM is the name given to the belief in direct, intuitive communion with God. All true religion has mystical elements, for all true religion holds that man can commune with God, soul with soul. In the Psalms, God is the Rock of the heart, the Portion of the cup, the Shepherd and Light, the Fountain of Life, an exceeding Joy. All this is, in a sense, *mystical* language. But mysticism has many dangers. It is apt to confuse vague emotionalism and even hysteria with communion with God. A further defect of mysticism is that, in its medieval forms, it tended to the multiplication of intermediate beings, or

angels, which it created to supply the means for that communion with God which, in theory, the mystics asserted was direct. Finally, from being a deep-seated, emotional aspect of religion, mysticism degenerated into intellectual sport, a play with words and a juggling with symbols.

Jewish mysticism passed through all these stages. Kabbala—as mysticism was called—really means “Tradition,” and the name proves that the theory had its roots far back in the past. It has just been said that there is mysticism in the Psalms. So there is in the idea of inspiration, the prophet’s receiving a message direct from God with whom he spoke face to face. After the prophetic age, Jewish mysticism displayed itself in intense personal religiousness, as well as in love for Apocalyptic, or dream, literature, in which the sleeper could, like Daniel, feel himself lapped to rest in the bosom of God.

All the earlier literary forms of mysti-

cism, or theosophy, made comparatively little impression on Jewish writers. But at the beginning of the thirteenth century a great development took place in the "secret" science of the Kabbala. The very period which produced the rationalism of Maimonides gave birth to the emotionalism of the Kabbala. The Kabbala was at first a protest against too much intellectualism and rigidity in religion. It reclaimed religion for the heart. A number of writers more or less dallied with the subject, and then the Kabbala took a bolder flight. Ezra, or Azriel, a teacher of Nachmanides, compiled a book called "Brilliance" (*Bahir*) in the year 1240. It was at once regarded as a very ancient book. As will be seen, the same pretence of antiquity was made with regard to another famous Kabbalistic work of a later generation. Under Todros Abulafia (1234-1304) and Abraham Abulafia (1240-1291), the mystical movement took a practical

shape, and the Jewish masses were much excited by stories of miracles performed and of the appearance of a new Messiah.

At this moment Moses of Leon (born in Leon in about 1250, died in Arevalo in 1305) wrote the most famous Kabbalistic book of the Middle Ages. This was named, in imitation of the Bahir, "Splendor" (*Zohar*), and its brilliant success matched its title. Not only did this extraordinary book raise the Kabbala to the zenith of its influence, but it gave it a firm and, as it has proved, unassailable basis. Like the Bahir, the *Zohar* was not offered to the public on its own merits, but was announced as the work of Simon, the son of Yochai, who lived in the second century. The *Zohar*, it was pretended, had been concealed in a cavern in Galilee for more than a thousand years, and had now been suddenly discovered. The *Zohar* is, indeed, a work of genius, its spiritual beauty, its fancy, its daring imagery, its

depth of devotion, ranking it among the great books of the world. Its literary style, however, is less meritorious; it is difficult and involved. As Chatterton clothed his ideas in a pseudo-archaic English, so Moses of Leon used an Aramaic idiom, which he handled clumsily and not as one to the manner born. It would not be so important to insist on the fact that the Zohar was a literary forgery, that it pretended to an antiquity it did not own, were it not that many Jews and Christians still write as though they believe that the book is as old as it was asserted to be. The defects of the Zohar are in keeping with this imposture. Absurd allegories are read into the Bible; the words of Scripture are counters in a game of distortion and combination; God himself is obscured amid a maze of mystic beings, childishly conceived and childishly named. Philosophically, the Zohar has no originality. Its doctrines of the Transmigration of the

Soul, of the Creation as God's self-revelation in the world, of the Emanation from the divine essence of semi-human, semi-divine powers, were only commonplaces of medieval theology. Its great original idea was that the revealed Word of God, the Torah, was designed for no other purpose than to effect a union between the soul of man and the soul of God.

Reinforced by this curious jumble of excellence and nonsense, the Kabbala became one of the strongest literary bonds between Jews and Christians. It is hardly to be wondered at, for the Zohar contains some ideas which are more Christian than Jewish. Christians, like Pico di Mirandola (1463-1494), under the influence of the Jewish Kabbalist Jochanan Aleman, and Johann Reuchlin (1455-1522), sharer of Pico's spirit and precursor of the improved study of the Scriptures in Europe, made the Zohar the basis of their defence of Jewish literature against the attempts of

various ecclesiastical bodies to crush and destroy it.

The Kabbala did not, however, retain a high place in the realm of literature. It greatly influenced Jewish religious ceremonies, it produced saintly souls, and from such centres as Safed and Salonica sent forth men like Solomon Molcho and Sabbatai Zevi, who maintained that they were Messiahs, and could perform miracles on the strength of Kabbalistic powers. But from the literary stand-point the Kabbala was a barren inspiration. The later works of Kabbalists are a rehash of the older works. The Zohar was the bible of the Kabbalists, and the later works of the school were commentaries on this bible. The Zohar had absorbed all the earlier Kabbalistic literature, such as the "Book of Creation" (*Sefer Yetsirah*), the Book Raziel, the Alphabet of Rabbi Akiba, and it was the final literary expression of the Kabbala.

It is, therefore, unnecessary to do more than name one or two of the more noted Kabbalists of post-Zoharistic ages. Isaac Lurya (1534-1572) was a saint, so devoid of self-conceit that he published nothing, though he flourished at the very time when the printing-press was throwing copies of the Zohar broadcast. We owe our knowledge of Lurya's Kabbalistic ideas to the prolific writings of his disciple Chayim Vital Calabrese, who died in Damascus in 1620. Other famous Kabbalists were Isaiah Hurwitz (about 1570-1630), author of a much admired ethical work, "The Two Tables of the Covenant" (*Sheloh*, as it is familiarly called from the initials of its Hebrew title); Nehemiah Chayun (about 1650-1730); and the Hebrew dramatist Moses Chayim Luzzatto (1707-1747).

A more recent Kabbalistic movement, led by the founder of the new saints, or Chassidim, Israel Baalshem (about 1700-1772), was even less literary than the one

just described. But the Kabbalists, medieval and modern, were meritorious writers in one field of literature. The Kabbalists and the Chassidim were the authors of some of the most exquisite prayers and meditations which the soul of the Jew has poured forth since the Psalms were completed. This redeems the later Kabbalistic literature from the altogether unfavorable verdict which would otherwise have to be passed on it.

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CHAPTER XVIII

ITALIAN JEWISH POETRY

Immanuel and Dante.—The Machberoth.—Judah Romano.—Kalonymos.—The Eben Bochan.—Moses Rieti.—Messer Leon.

THE course of Jewish literature in Italy ran along the same lines as in Spain. The Italian group of authors was less brilliant, but the difference was one of degree, not of kind. The Italian aristocracy, like the Moorish caliphs and viziers, patronized learning, and encouraged the Jews in their literary ambitions.

Yet the fact that the inspiration in Spain came from Islam and in Italy from Christianity produced some consequences. In Spain the Jews followed Arab models of style. In Italy the influence of classical models was felt at the time of the Renaissance. Most noteworthy of all was the in-

debtedness of the Hebrew poets of Italy to Dante.

It is not improbable that Dante was a personal friend of the most noted of these Jewish poets, Immanuel, the son of Solomon of Rome. Like the other Jews of Rome, Immanuel stood in the most friendly relations with Christians, for nowhere was medieval intolerance less felt than in the very seat of the Pope, the head of the Church. Thus, on the one hand Immanuel was a leading member of the synagogue, and, on the other, he carried on a literary correspondence with learned Christians, with poets, and men of science. He was himself a physician, and his poems breathe a scientific spirit. As happened earlier in Spain, the circle of Immanuel regarded verse-making as part of the culture of a scholar. Witty verses, in the form of riddles and epigrams, were exchanged at the meetings of the circle. With these poets, among whom Kalonymos was in-

cluded, the penning of verses was a fashion. On the other hand, music was not so much cultivated by the Italian Hebrews as by the Spanish. Hence, both Immanuel and Kalonymos lack the lightness and melody of the best writers of Hebrew verse in Spain. The Italians atoned for this loss by their subject-matter. They are joyous poets, full of the gladness of life. They are secular, not religious poets; the best of the Spanish-Hebrew poetry was devotional, and the best of the Italian so secular that it was condemned by pietists as too frivolous and too much "disfigured by ill-timed levity."

Immanuel was born in Rome in about 1270. He rarely mentions his father, but often names his mother Justa as a woman of pious and noble character. As a youth, he had a strong fancy for scientific study, and was nourished on the "Guide" of Maimonides, on the works of the Greeks and Arabs, and on the writings of the

Christian school-men, which he read in Hebrew translations. Besides philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, and medicine, Immanuel studied the Bible and the Talmud, and became an accomplished scholar. He was not born a poet, but he read deeply the poetical literature of Jews and Christians, and took lessons in rhyme-making. He was wealthy, and his house was a rendezvous of wits and scientists. His own position in the Jewish community was remarkable. It has already been said that he took an active part in the management of communal affairs, but he did more than this. He preached in the synagogue on the Day of Atonement, and delivered eulogistic orations over the remains of departed worthies. Towards the end of his life he suffered losses both in fortune and in friends, but he finally found a new home in Fermo, where he was cordially welcomed in 1328. The date of his death is uncertain, but he died in about 1330.

His works were versatile rather than profound. He wrote grammatical treatises and commentaries, which display learning more than originality. But his poetical writings are of great interest in the history of Jewish literature. He lived in the dawn-flush of the Renaissance in Italy. The Italian language was just evolving itself, under the genius of Dante, from a mere jumble of dialects into a literary language. Dante did for Italy what Chaucer was soon after to do for England. On the one side influenced by the Renaissance and the birth of the new Italian language, on the other by the Jewish revival of letters in Spain and Provence, the Italian Jews alone combined the Jewish spirit with the spirit of the classical Renaissance. Immanuel was the incarnation of this complex soul.

This may be seen from the form of Immanuel's *Machberoth*, or "Collection." The latter portion of it, named separately "Hell and Eden," was imitated from the

Christian Dante; the poem as a whole was planned on Charizi's *Tachkemoni*, a Hebrew development of the Arabic Divan. The poet is not the hero of his own song, but like the Arabic poets of the divan, conceives a personage who fills the centre of the canvas—a personage really identical with the author, yet in a sense other than he. Much quaintness of effect is produced by this double part played by the poet, who, as it were, satirizes his own doings. In Immanuel's *Machberoth* there is much variety of romantic incident. But it is in satire that he reaches his highest level. Love and wine are the frequent burdens of his song, as they are in the Provençal and Italian poetry of his day. Immanuel was something of a Voltaire in his jocose treatment of sacred things, and pietists like Joseph Karo inhibited the study of the *Machberoth*. Others, too, described his songs as sensuous and his satires as blasphemous. But the devout and earnest

piety of some of Immanuel's prayers,—some of them to be found in the *Machberoth* themselves—proves that Immanuel's licentiousness and levity were due, not to lack of reverence, but to the attempt to reconcile the ideals of Italian society of the period of the Renaissance with the ideals of Judaism.

Immanuel owed his rhymed prose to Charizi, but again he shows his devotion to two masters by writing Hebrew sonnets. The sonnet was new then to Italian verse, and Immanuel's Hebrew specimens thus belong to the earliest sonnets written in any literature. It is, indeed, impossible to convey a just sense of the variety of subject and form in the *Machberoth*. "Serious and frivolous topics trip each other by the heels; all metrical forms, prayers, elegies, passages in unmetrical rhymes, all are mingled together." The last chapter is, however, of a different character, and it has often been printed as a separate work. It

is the "Hell and Eden" to which allusion has already been made.

The link between Immanuel and his Provençal contemporary Kalonymos was supplied by Judah Romano, the Jewish school-man. All three were in the service of the king of Naples. Kalonymos was the equal of Romano as a philosopher and not much below Immanuel as a satirist. He was a more fertile poet than Immanuel, for, while Immanuel remained the sole representative of his manner, Kalonymos gave birth to a whole school of imitators. Kalonymos wrote many translations, of Galen, Averroes, Aristotle, al-Farabi, Ptolemy, and Archimedes. But it was his keen wit more than his learning that made him popular in Rome, and impelled the Jews of that city, headed by Immanuel, to persuade Kalonymos to settle permanently in Italy. Kalonymos' two satirical poems were called "The Touchstone" (*Eben Bochan*) and "The Purim Tractate." These satir-

ize the customs and social habits of the Jews of his day in a bright and powerful style. In his Purim Tractate, Kalonymos parodies the style, logic, and phraseology of the Talmud, and his work was the forerunner of a host of similar parodies.

There were many Italian writers of *Piyutim*, i. e. Synagogue hymns, but these were mediocre in merit. The elegies written in lament for the burning of the Law and the martyrdoms endured in various parts of Italy were the only meritorious devotional poems composed in Hebrew in that country. Italy remained famous in Hebrew poetry for secular, not for religious compositions. In the fifteenth century Moses Rieti (born 1389, died later than 1452) imitated Dante once more in his "Lesser Sanctuary" (*Mikdash Meät*). Here again may be noticed a feature peculiar to Italian Hebrew poetry. Rieti uses regular stanzas, Italian forms of verse, in this matter following the example of Im-

manuel. Messer Leon, a physician of Mantua, wrote a treatise on Biblical rhetoric (1480). Again, the only important writer of dramas in Hebrew was, as we shall see, an Italian Jew, who copied Italian models. Though, therefore, the Hebrew poetry of Italy scarcely reaches the front rank, it is historically of first-rate importance. It represents the only effects of the Renaissance on Jewish literature. In other countries, the condition of the Jews was such that they were shut off from external influences. Their literature suffered as their lives did from imprisonment within the Ghettos, which were erected both by the Jews themselves and by the governments of Europe.

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CHAPTER XIX

ETHICAL LITERATURE

Bachya Ibn Pekuda.—Choboth ha-Lebaboht.—Sefer ha-Chassidim.—Rokeach.—Yedaiah Bedaressi's Bechinath Olam.—Isaac Aboab's Menorath ha-Maor.—Ibn Chabib's "Eye of Jacob."—Zevaot, or Ethical Wills.—Joseph Ibn Caspi.—Solomon Alami.

A LARGE proportion of all Hebrew books is ethical. Many of the works already treated here fall under this category. The Talmudical, exegetical, and philosophical writings of Jews were also ethical treatises. In this chapter, however, attention will be restricted to a few books which are in a special sense ethical.

Collections of moral proverbs, such as the "Choice of Pearls," attributed to Ibn Gebirol, and the "Maxims of the Philosophers" by Charizi, were great favorites in the Middle Ages. They had a distinct charm, but they were not original. They

were either compilations from older books or direct translations from the Arabic. It was far otherwise with the ethical work entitled "Heart Duties" (*Choboth ha-Lebaboth*), by Bachya Ibn Pekuda (about 1050-1100). This was as original as it was forcible. Bachya founded his ethical system on the Talmud and on the philosophical notions current in his day, but he evolved out of these elements an original view of life. The inner duties dictated by conscience were set above all conventional morality. Bachya probed the very heart of religion. His soul was filled with God, and this communion, despite the ascetic feelings to which it gave rise, was to Bachya an exceeding joy. His book thrills the reader with the author's own chastened enthusiasm. The "Heart Duties" of Bachya is the most inspired book written by a Jew in the Middle Ages.

In part worthy of a place by the side of Bachya's treatise is an ethical book written

in the Rhinelands during the thirteenth century. "The Book of the Pious" (*Sefer ha-Chassidim*) is mystical, and in course of time superstitious elements were interpolated. Wrongly attributed to a single writer, Judah Chassid, the "Book of the Pious" was really the combined product of the Jewish spirit in the thirteenth century. It is a conglomerate of the sublime and the trivial, the purely ethical with the ceremonial. With this popular and remarkable book may be associated other conglomerates of the ritual, the ethical, and the mystical, as the *Rokeach* by Eleazar of Worms.

A simpler but equally popular work was Yedaiah Bedaressi's "Examination of the World" (*Bechinath Olam*), written in about the year 1310. Its style is florid but poetical, and the many quaint turns which it gives to quotations from the Bible remind the reader of Ibn Gebirol. Its earnest appeal to man to aim at the higher

life, its easily intelligible and commonplace morals, endeared it to the "general reader" of the Middle Ages. Few books have been more often printed, few more often translated.

Another favorite class of ethical books consisted of compilations made direct from the Talmud and the Midrash. The oldest and most prized of these was Isaac Aboab's "Lamp of Light" (*Menorath ha-Maor*). It was an admirably written book, clearly arranged, and full to the brim of ethical gems. Aboab's work was written between 1310 and 1320. It is arranged according to subjects, differing in this respect from another very popular compilation, Jacob Ibn Chabib's "Eye of Jacob" (*En Yaakob*), which was completed in the sixteenth century. In this, the Hagadic passages of the Talmud are extracted without arrangement, the order of the Talmud itself being retained. The "Eye of Jacob" was an extremely popular work.

Of the purely devotional literature of Judaism, it is impossible to speak here. One other ethical book must be here noticed, for it has attained wide and deserved popularity. This is the "Path of the Upright" (*Messilath Yesharim*) by Moses Chayim Luzzatto, of whom more will be said in a later chapter. But a little more space must be here devoted to a species of ethical tract which was peculiar to Jewish moralists. These tracts were what are known as Ethical Wills.

These Ethical Wills (*Zeva'oth*) contained the express directions of fathers to their children or of aged teachers to their disciples. They were for the most part written calmly in old age, but not immediately before the writers' death. Some of them were very carefully composed, and amount to formal ethical treatises. But in the main they are charmingly natural and unaffected. They were intended for the absolutely private use of children and rela-

tives, or of some beloved pupil who held the dearest place in his master's regard. They were not designed for publication, and thus, as the writer had no reason to expect that his words would pass beyond a limited circle, the Ethical Will is a clear revelation of his innermost feelings and ideals. Intellectually some of these Ethical Wills are poor; morally, however, the general level is very high.

Addresses of parents to their children occur in the Bible, the Apocrypha, and the Rabbinical literature. But the earliest extant Ethical Will written as an independent document is that of Eleazar, the son of Isaac of Worms (about 1050), who must not be confused with the author of the *Rokeach*. The eleventh and twelfth centuries supply few examples of the Ethical Will, but from the thirteenth century onwards there is a plentiful array of them. "Think not of evil," says Eleazar of Worms, "for evil thinking leads to evil

doing. . . . Purify thy body, the dwelling-place of thy soul. . . . Give of all thy food a portion to God. Let God's portion be the best, and give it to the poor." The will of the translator Judah Ibn Tibbon (about 1190) contains at least one passage worthy of Ruskin: "Avoid bad society, make thy books thy companions, let thy book-cases and shelves be thy gardens and pleasure-grounds. Pluck the fruit that grows therein, gather the roses, the spices, and the myrrh. If thy soul be satiate and weary, change from garden to garden, from furrow to furrow, from sight to sight. Then will thy desire renew itself, and thy soul be satisfied with delight." The will of Nachmanides is an unaffected eulogy of humility. Asher, the son of Yechiel (fourteenth century), called his will "Ways of Life," and it includes 132 maxims, which are often printed in the prayer-book. "Do not obey the Law for reward, nor avoid sin from fear of punishment, but serve God

from love. Sleep not over-much, but rise with the birds. Be not over-hasty to reply to offensive remarks; raise not thy hand against another, even if he curse thy father or mother in thy presence."

Some of these wills, like that of the son of the last mentioned, are written in rhymed prose; some are controversial. Joseph Ibn Caspi writes in 1322: "How can I know God, and that he is one, unless I know what knowing means, and what constitutes unity? Why should these things be left to non-Jewish philosophers? Why should Aristotle retain sole possession of the treasures that he stole from Solomon?" The belief that Aristotle had visited Jerusalem with Alexander the Great, and there obtained possession of Solomon's wisdom, was one of the most curious myths of the Middle Ages. The will of Eleazar the Levite of Mainz (1357) is a simple document, without literary merit, but containing a clear exposi-

tion of duty. "Judge every man charitably, and use your best efforts to find a kindly explanation of conduct, however suspicious. . . . Give in charity an exact tithe of your property. Never turn a poor man away empty-handed. Talk no more than is necessary, and thus avoid slander. Be not as dumb cattle that utter no word of gratitude, but thank God for his bounties at the time at which they occur, and in your prayers let the memory of these personal favors warm your hearts, and prompt you to special fervor during the utterance of the communal thanks for communal well-being. When words of thanks occur in the liturgy, pause and silently reflect on the goodness of God to you that day."

In striking contrast to the simplicity of the foregoing is the elaborate "Letter of Advice" by Solomon Alami (beginning of the fifteenth century). It is composed in beautiful rhymed prose, and is an import-

ant historical record. For the author shared the sufferings of the Jews of the Iberian peninsula in 1391, and this gives pathetic point to his counsel: "Flee without hesitation when exile is the only means of securing religious freedom; have no regard to your worldly career or your property, but go at once."

It is needless to indicate fully the nature of the Ethical Wills of the sixteenth and subsequent centuries. They are closely similar to the foregoing, but they tend to become more learned and less simple. Yet, though as literature they are often quite insignificant, as ethics they rarely sink below mediocrity.

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CHAPTER XX

TRAVELLERS' TALES

Eldad the Danite.—Benjamin of Tudela.—Petachiah of Ratisbon.—Esthori Parchi.—Abraham Farissol.—David Reubeni and Molcho.—Antonio de Montesinos and Manasseh ben Israel.—Tobiah Cohen.—Wessely.

THE voluntary and enforced travels of the Jews produced, from the earliest period after the destruction of the Temple, an extensive, if fragmentary, geographical literature. In the Talmud and later religious books, in the Letters of the Gaonim, in the correspondence of Jewish ambassadors, in the autobiographical narratives interspersed in the works of all Jewish scholars of the Middle Ages, in the *Aruch*, or Talmudical Lexicon, of Nathan of Rome, in the satirical romances of the poetical globe-trotters, Zabara and Charizi, and, finally, in the Bible commentaries written by Jews,

many geographical notes are to be found. But the composition of complete works dedicated to travel and exploration dates only from the twelfth century.

Before that time, however, interest in the whereabouts of the Lost Ten Tribes gave rise to a book which has been well called the *Arabian Nights of the Jews*. The "Diary of Eldad the Danite," written in about the year 880, was a popular romance, to which additions and alterations were made at various periods. This diary tells of mighty Israelite empires, especially of the tribe of Moses, the peoples of which were all virtuous, all happy, and long-lived.

"A river flows round their land for a distance of four days' journey on every side. They dwell in beautiful houses provided with handsome towers, which they have built themselves. There is nothing unclean among them, neither in the case of birds, venison, nor domesticated animals; there are no wild beasts, no flies, no foxes, no vermin, no serpents, no dogs, and, in general, nothing that does harm; they have only sheep and cattle, which bear twice a year. They sow and reap, they have all kinds of gardens with all kinds

of fruits and cereals, beans, melons, gourds, onions, garlic, wheat, and barley, and the seed grows a hundredfold. They have faith; they know the Law, the Mishnah, the Talmud, and the Hagadah. . . . No child, be it son or daughter, dies during the life-time of its parents, but they reach a third and fourth generation. They do all the field-work themselves, having no male nor female servants. They do not close their houses at night, for there is no thief or evil-doer among them. They have plenty of gold and silver; they sow flax, and cultivate the crimson-worm, and make beautiful garments. . . . The river Sambatyon is two hundred yards broad, about as far as a bow-shot. It is full of sand and stones, but without water; the stones make a great noise, like the waves of the sea and a stormy wind, so that in the night the noise is heard at a distance of half a day's journey. There are fish in it, and all kinds of clean birds fly round it. And this river of stone and sand rolls during the six working-days, and rests on the Sabbath day. As soon as the Sabbath begins, fire surrounds the river, and the flames remain till the next evening, when the Sabbath ends. Thus no human being can reach the river for a distance of half a mile on either side; the fire consumes all that grows there."

With wild rapture the Jews of the ninth century heard of these prosperous and powerful kingdoms. Hopes of a restoration to former dignity encouraged them to believe in the mythical narrative of Eldad.

It is doubtful whether he was a *bona fide* traveller. At all events, his book includes much that became the legendary property of all peoples in the Middle Ages, such as the fable of the mighty Christian Emperor of India, Prester John.

Some further account of this semi-mythical monarch is contained in the first real Jewish traveller's book, the "Itinerary" of Benjamin of Tudela. This Benjamin was a merchant, who, in the year 1160, started on a long journey, which was prompted partly by commercial, partly by scientific motives. He visited a large part of Europe and Asia, went to Jerusalem and Bagdad, and gives in his "Itinerary" some remarkable geographical facts and some equally remarkable fables. He tells, for instance, the story of the pretended Messiah, David Alroy, whom Disraeli made the hero of one of his romances. Benjamin of Tudela's "Itinerary" was a real contribution to geography.

Soon after Benjamin, another Jew, Petachiah of Ratisbon, set out on a similar but less extended tour, which occupied him during the years 1179 and 1180. His "Travels" are less informing than those of his immediate predecessor, but his descriptions of the real or reputed sepulchres of ancient worthies and his account of the Jewish College in Bagdad are full of romantic interest, which was not lessened for medieval readers because much of Petachiah's narrative was legendary.

A far more important work was written by the first Jewish explorer of Palestine, Esthori Parchi, a contemporary of Mandeville. His family originated in Florenza, in Andalusia, and the family name Parchi (the Flower) was derived from this circumstance. Esthori was himself born in Provence, and was a student of science as well as of the Talmud. When he, together with the rest of the Jews of France, was exiled in 1306, he wandered to Spain and

Egypt until the attraction of the Holy Land proved irresistible. His manner was careful, and his love of accuracy unusual for his day. Hence, he was not content to collect all ancient and contemporary references to the sites of Palestine. For seven years he devoted himself to a personal exploration of the country, two years being passed in Galilee. In 1322 he completed his work, which he called *Kaphtor va-Pherach* (Bunch and Flower) in allusion to his own name.

Access to the Holy Land became easier for Jews in the fourteenth century. Before that time the city of Jerusalem had for a considerable period been barred to Jewish pilgrims. By the laws of Constantine and of Omar no Jew might enter within the precincts of his ancient capital. Even in the centuries subsequent to Omar, such pilgrimages were fraught with danger, but the poems of Jehuda Halevi, the tolerance of Islam, and the reputation of Northern

Syria as a centre of the Kabbala, combined to draw many Jews to Palestine. Many letters and narratives were the results. One characteristic specimen must suffice. In 1488 Obadiah of Bertinoro, author of the most popular commentary on the Mishnah, removed from Italy to Jerusalem, where he was appointed Rabbi. In a letter to his father he gives an intensely moving account of his voyage and of the state of Hebron and Zion. The narrative is full of personal detail, and is marked throughout by deep love for his father, which struggles for the mastery with his love for the Holy City.

A more ambitious work was the "*Itinera Mundi*" of Abraham Farissol, written in the autumn of 1524. This treatise was based upon original researches as well as on the works of Christian and Arabian geographers. He incidentally says a good deal about the condition of the Jews in various parts of the world. Indeed, al-

most all the geographical writings of Jews are social histories of their brethren in faith. Somewhat later, David Reubeni published some strange stories as to the Jews. He went to Rome, where he made a considerable sensation, and was received by Pope Clement VII (1523-1534). Dwarfish in stature and dark in complexion, David Reubeni was wasted by continual fasting, but his manner, though harsh and forbidding, was intrepid and awe-inspiring. His outrageous falsehoods for a time found ready acceptance with Jews and Christians alike, and his fervid Messianism won over to his cause many Marranos—Jews who had been forced by the Inquisition in Spain to assume the external garb of Christianity. His chief claim on the memory of posterity was his connection with the dramatic career of Solomon Molcho (1501-1532), a youth noble in mind and body, who at Reubeni's instigation personated the Messiah, and in early manhood died a martyr's

death amid the flames of the Inquisition at Mantua.

The geographical literature of the Jews did not lose its association with Messianic hopes. Antonio de Montesinos, in 1642, imagined that he had discovered in South America the descendants of the Ten Tribes. He had been led abroad by business considerations and love of travel, and in Brazil came across a mestizo Indian, from whose statements he conceived the firm belief that the Ten Tribes resided and thrived in Brazil. Two years later he visited Amsterdam, and, his imagination aflame with the hopes which had not been stifled by several years' endurance of the prisons and tortures of the Inquisition, persuaded Manasseh ben Israel to accept his statements. On his death-bed in Brazil, Montesinos reiterated his assertions, and Manasseh ben Israel not only founded thereon his noted book, "The Hope of Israel," but under the inspiration of simi-

lar ideas felt impelled to visit London, and win from Cromwell the right of the Jews to resettle in England.

Jewish geographical literature grew apace in the eighteenth century. A famous book, the "Work of Tobiah," was written at the beginning of this period by Tobiah Cohen, who was born at Metz in 1652, and died in Jerusalem in 1729. It is a medley of science and fiction, an encyclopedia dealing with all branches of knowledge. He had studied at the Universities of Frankfort and Padua, had enjoyed the patronage of the Elector of Brandenburg, and his medical knowledge won him many distinguished patients in Constantinople. Thus his work contains many medical chapters of real value, and he gives one of the earliest accounts of recently discovered drugs and medicinal plants. Among other curiosities he maintained that he had discovered the Pygmies.

From this absorbing but confusing book

our survey must turn finally to N. H. Wessely, who in 1782 for the first time maintained the importance of the study of geography in Jewish school education. The works of the past, with their consoling legends and hopes, continued to hold a place in the heart of Jewish readers. But from Wessely's time onwards a long series of Jewish explorers and travellers have joined the ranks of those who have opened up for modern times a real knowledge of the globe.

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CHAPTER XXI

HISTORIANS AND CHRONICLERS

Order of the Tannaim and Amoraim.—Achimaaz.—Abraham Ibn Daud.—Josippon.—Historical Elegies, or Selichoth.—Memorial Books.—Abraham Zacuto.—Elijah Kapsali.—Usque.—Ibn Verga.—Joseph Cohen.—David Gans.—Gedaliah Ibn Yachya.—Azariah di Rossi.

THE historical books to be found in the Bible, the Apocrypha, and the Hellenistic literature prove that the Hebrew genius was not unfitted for the presentation of the facts of Jewish life. These older works, as well as the writings of Josephus, also show a faculty for placing local records in relation to the wider facts of general history. After the dispersion of the Jews, however, the local was the only history in which the Jews could bear a part. The Jews read history as a mere commentary on their own fate, and hence they were unable to take the wide outlook into the world re-

quired for the compilation of objective histories. Thus, in their aim to find religious consolation for their sufferings in the Middle Ages, the Jewish historians sought rather to trace the hand of Providence than to analyze the human causes of the changes in the affairs of mankind.

But in another sense the Jews were essentially gifted with the historical spirit. The great men of Israel were not local heroes. Just as Plutarch's Lives were part of the history of the world's politics, so Jewish biographies of learned men were part of the history of the world's civilization. With the "Order of the Tannaim and Amoraim" (written about the year 1100) begins a series of such biographical works, in which more appreciation of sober fact is displayed than might have been expected from the period. In the same way the famous Letter of Sherira Gaon on the compilation of the Rabbinical literature (980) marked great progress in the critical

examination of historical problems. Later works did not maintain the same level.

In the Middle Ages, Jewish histories mostly took the form of uncritical Chronicles, which included legends and traditions as well as assured facts. Their interest and importance lie in the personal and communal details with which they abound. Sometimes they are confessedly local. This is the case with the "Chronicle of Achimaaz," written by him in 1055 in rhymed prose. In an entertaining style, he tells of the early settlements of the Jews in Southern Italy, and throws much light on the intercommunication between the scattered Jewish congregations of his time. A larger canvas was filled by Abraham Ibn Daud, the physician and philosopher who was born in Toledo in 1110, and met a martyr's end at the age of seventy. His "Book of Tradition" (*Sefer ha-Kabbalah*), written in 1161, was designed to present, in opposition to the Karaites, the chain of

Jewish tradition as a series of unbroken links from the age of Moses to Ibn Daud's own times. Starting with the Creation, his history ends with the anti-Karaitic crusade of Judah Ibn Ezra in Granada (1150). Abraham Ibn Daud shows in this work considerable critical power, but in his two other histories, one dealing with the history of Rome from its foundation to the time of King Reccared in Spain, the other a narrative of the history of the Jews during the Second Temple, the author relied entirely on "Josippon." This was a medieval concoction which long passed as the original Josephus. "Josippon" was a romance rather than a history. Culled from all sources, from Strabo, Lucian, and Eusebius, as well as from Josephus, this marvellous book exercised strong influence on the Jewish imagination, and supplied an antidote to the tribulations of the present by the consolations of the past and the vivid hopes for the future.

For a long period Abraham Ibn Daud found no imitators. Jewish history was written as part of the Jewish religion. Yet, incidentally, many historical passages were introduced in the works of Jewish scholars and travellers, and the liturgy was enriched by many beautiful historical Elegies, which were a constant call to heroism and fidelity. These Elegies, or *Selichoth*, were composed throughout the Middle Ages, and their passionate outpourings of lamentation and trust give them a high place in Jewish poetry. They are also important historically, and fully justify the fine utterance with which Zunz introduces them, an utterance which was translated by George Eliot as follows:

If there are ranks in suffering, Israel takes precedence of all the nations—if the duration of sorrows and the patience with which they are borne ennoble, the Jews are among the aristocracy of every land—if a literature is called rich in the possession of a few classic tragedies, what shall we say to a National Tragedy lasting for fifteen hundred years, in which the poets and the actors were also the heroes?

The story of the medieval section of this pathetic martyrdom is written in the *Selichoth* and in the more prosaic records known as "Memorial Books" (in German, *Memorbücher*), which are lists of martyrs and brief eulogies of their careers.

For the next formal history we must pass to Abraham Zacuto. In his old age he employed some years of comparative quiet, after a stormy and unhappy life, in writing a "Book of Genealogies" (*Yuchasin*). He had been exiled from Spain in 1492, and twelve years later composed his historical work in Tunis. Like Abraham Ibn Daud's book, it opens with the Creation, and ends with the author's own day. Though Zacuto's work is more celebrated than historical, it nevertheless had an important share in reawaking the dormant interest of Jews in historical research. Thus we find Elijah Kapsali of Candia writing, in 1523, a "History of the Ottoman Empire," and Joseph Cohen, of Avignon, a "History of France

and Turkey," in 1554, in which he included an account of the rebellion of Fiesco in Genoa, where the author was then residing.

The sixteenth century witnessed the production of several popular Jewish histories. At that epoch the horizon of the world was extending under new geographical and intellectual discoveries. Israel, on the other hand, seemed to be sinking deeper and deeper into the slough of despond. Some of the men who had themselves been the victims of persecution saw that the only hope lay in rousing the historical consciousness of their brethren. History became the consolation of the exiles from Spain who found themselves pent up within the walls of the Ghettos, which were first built in the sixteenth century. Samuel Usque was a fugitive from the Inquisition, and his dialogues, "Consolations for the Tribulations of Israel" (written in Portuguese, in 1553), are a long drawn-out sigh of pain passing into a sigh of relief. Usque opens

with a passionate idyl in which the history of Israel in the near past is told by the shepherd Icabo. To him Numeo and Zicareo offer consolation, and they pour balm into his wounded heart. The vividness of Usque's style, his historical insight, his sturdy optimism, his poetical force in interpreting suffering as the means of attaining the highest life in God, raise his book above the other works of its class and age.

Usque's poem did not win the same popularity as two other elegiac histories of the same period. These were the "Rod of Judah" (*Shebet Jehudah*) and the "Valley of Tears" (*Emek ha-Bachah*). The former was the work of three generations of the Ibn Verga family. Judah died before the expulsion from Spain, but his son Solomon participated in the final troubles of the Spanish Jews, and was even forced to join the ranks of the Marranos. The grandson, Joseph Ibn Verga, became Rabbi in Adrianople, and was cultured in classical as

well as Jewish lore. Their composite work, "The Rod of Judah," was completed in 1554. It is a well-written but badly arranged martyrology, and over all its pages might be inscribed the Talmudical motto, that God's chastisements of Israel are chastisements of love. The other work referred to is Joseph Cohen's "Valley of Tears," completed in 1575. The author was born in Avignon in 1496, four years after his father had shared in the exile from Spain. He himself suffered expatriation, for, though a distinguished physician and the private doctor of the Doge Andrea Doria, he was expelled with the rest of the Jews from Genoa in 1550. Settled in the little town of Voltaggio, he devoted himself to writing the annals of European and Jewish history. His style is clear and forcible, and recalls the lucid simplicity of the historical books of the Bible.

The only other histories that need be critically mentioned here are the "Branch

of David" (*Zemach David*), the "Chain of Tradition" (*Shalsheleth ha-Kabbalah*), and the "Light of the Eyes" (*Meör Enayim*). Abraham de Porta Leone's "Shields of the Mighty" (*Shilte ha-Gibborim*, printed in Mantua in 1612); Leon da Modena's "Ceremonies and Customs of the Jews," (printed in Paris in 1637); David Conforte's "Call of the Generations" (*Kore ha-Doroth*, written in Palestine in about 1670); Yechiel Heilprin's "Order of Generations" (*Seder ha-Doroth*, written in Poland in 1725); and Chayim Azulai's "Name of the Great Ones" (written in Leghorn in 1774), can receive only a bare mention.

The author of the "Branch of David," David Gans, was born in Westphalia in about 1540. He was the first German Jew of his age to take real interest in the study of history. He was a man of scientific culture, corresponded with Kepler, and was a personal friend of Tycho Brahe. For the latter Gans made a German translation

of parts of the Hebrew version of the Tables of Alfonso, originally compiled in 1260. Gans wrote works on mathematical and physical geography, and treatises on arithmetic and geometry. His history, "Branch of David," was extremely popular. For a man of his scientific training it shows less critical power than might have been expected, but the German Jews did not begin to apply criticism to history till after the age of Mendelssohn. In one respect, however, the "Branch of David" displays the width of the author's culture. Not only does he tell the history of the Jews, but in the second part of his work he gives an account of many lands and cities, especially of Bohemia and Prague, and adds a striking description of the secret courts (*Vehmgerichte*) of Westphalia.

It is hard to think that the authors of the "Chain of Tradition" and of the "Light of the Eyes" were contemporaries. Azariah di Rossi (1514-1588), the writer

of the last mentioned book, was the founder of historical criticism among the Jews. Elias del Medigo (1463-1498) had led in the direction, but di Rossi's work anticipated the methods, of the German school of "scientific" Jewish writers, who, at the beginning of the present century, applied scientific principles to the study of Jewish traditions. On the other hand, Gedaliah Ibn Yachya (1515-1587) was so utterly uncritical that his "Chain of Tradition" was nicknamed by Joseph Delmedigo the "Chain of Lies." Gedaliah was a man of wealth, and he expended his means in the acquisition of books and in making journeys in search of sacred and profane knowledge. Yet Gedaliah made up in style for his lack of historical method. The "Chain of Tradition" is a picturesque and enthralling book, it is a warm and cheery retrospect, and even deserves to be called a prose epic. Besides, many of his statements that were wont to be treated as

altogether unauthentic have been vindicated by later research. Azariah di Rossi, on the other hand, is immortalized by his spirit rather than his actual contributions to historical literature. He came of an ancient family said to have been carried to Rome by Titus, and lived in Ferrara, where, in 1574, he produced his "Light of the Eyes." This is divided into three parts, the first devoted to general history, the second to the Letter of Aristeas, the third to the solution of several historical problems, all of which had been neglected by Jews and Christians alike. Azariah di Rossi was the first critic to open up true lines of research into the Hellenistic literature of the Jews of Alexandria. With him the true historical spirit once more descended on the Jewish genius.

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CHAPTER XXII

ISAAC ABARBANEL

Abarbanel's Philosophy and Biblical Commentaries.
—Elias Levita.—Ze'ena u-Re'ena.—Moses Alshech.—The Biur.

THE career of Don Isaac Abarbanel (born in Lisbon in 1437, died in Venice in 1509) worthily closes the long services which the Jews of Spain rendered to the state and to learning. The earlier part of his life was spent in the service of Alfonso V of Portugal. He possessed considerable wealth, and his house, which he himself tells us was built with spacious halls, was the meeting-place of scholars, diplomatists, and men of science. Among his other occupations, he busied himself in ransoming Jewish slaves, and obtained the co-operation of some Italian Jews in this object.

When Alfonso died, Abarbanel not only

lost his post as finance minister, but was compelled to flee for his life. He shared the fall of the Duke of Braganza, whose popularity was hateful to Alfonso's successor. Don Isaac escaped to Castile in 1484, and, amid the friendly smiles of the cultured Jews of Toledo, set himself to resume the literary work he had been forced to lay aside while burdened with affairs of state. He began the compilation of commentaries on the historical books of the Bible, but he was not long left to his studies. Ferdinand and Isabella, under the very eyes of Torquemada and the Inquisition, entrusted the finances of their kingdom to the Jew Abarbanel during the years 1484 to 1492.

In the latter year, Abarbanel was driven from Spain in the general expulsion instigated by the Inquisition. He found a temporary asylum in Naples, where he also received a state appointment. But he was soon forced to flee again, this time to Corfu. "My wife, my sons, and my books

are far from me," he wrote, "and I am left alone, a stranger in a strange land." But his spirit was not crushed by these successive misfortunes. He continued to compile huge works at a very rapid rate. He was not destined, however, to end his life in obscurity. In 1503 he was given a diplomatic post in Venice, and he passed his remaining years in happiness and honor. He ended the splendid roll of famous Spanish Jews with a career peculiarly Spanish. He gave a final, striking example of that association of life with literature which of old characterized Jews, but which found its greatest and last home in Spain.

As a writer, Abarbanel has many faults. He is very verbose, and his mannerisms are provoking. Thus, he always introduces his commentaries with a long string of questions, which he then proceeds to answer. It was jokingly said of him that he made many sceptics, for not one in a

score of his readers ever got beyond the questions to the answers. There is this truth in the sarcasm, that Abarbanel, despite his essential lucidity, is very hard to read. Though Abarbanel has obvious faults, his good qualities are equally tangible. No predecessor of Abarbanel came so near as he did to the modern ideal of a commentator on the Bible. Ibn Ezra was the father of the "Higher Criticism," i. e. the attempt to explain the evolution of the text of Scripture. The Kimchis developed the strictly grammatical exposition of the Bible. But Abarbanel understood that, to explain the Bible, one must try to reproduce the atmosphere in which it was written; one must realize the ideas and the life of the times with which the narrative deals. His own practical state-craft stood him in good stead. He was able to form a conception of the politics of ancient Judea. His commentaries are works on the philosophy of history. His more formal phi-

losophical works, such as his "Deeds of God" (*Miphaloth Elohim*), are of less value, they are borrowed in the main from Maimonides. In his Talmudical writings, notably his "Salvation of his Anointed" (*Yeshuoth Meshicho*), Abarbanel displays a lighter and more original touch than in his philosophical treatises. But his works on the Bible are his greatest literary achievement. Besides the merits already indicated, these books have another important excellence. He was the first Jew to make extensive use of Christian commentaries. He must be credited with the discovery that the study of the Bible may be unsectarian, and that all who hold the Bible in honor may join hands in elucidating it.

A younger contemporary of Abarbanel was also an apostle of the same view. This was Elias Levita (1469-1549). He was a Grammarian, or Massorite, i. e. a student of the tradition (*Massorah*) as to the He-

brew text of the Bible, and he was an energetic teacher of Christians. In the sixteenth century the study of Hebrew made much progress in Europe, but the Jews themselves were only indirectly associated with this advance. Despite Abarbanel, Jewish commentaries remained either homiletic or mystical, or, like the popular works of Moses Alshech, were more or less Midrashic in style. But the Bible was a real delight to the Jews, and it is natural that such books were often compiled for the masses. Mention must be made of the *Ze'ena u-Re'ena* ("Go forth and see"), a work written at the beginning of the eighteenth century in Jewish-German for the use of women, a work which is still beloved of the Jewess. But the seeds sown by Abarbanel and others of his school eventually produced an abundant harvest. Mendelssohn's German edition of the Pentateuch with the Hebrew Commentary (*Biur*) was the turning-point in the march

towards the modern exposition of the Bible, which had been inaugurated by the statesman-scholar of Spain.

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CHAPTER XXIII

THE SHULCHAN ARUCH

Asheri's Arba Turim.—Chiddushim and Teshuboth.
—Solomon ben Adereth.—Meir of Rothenburg.
—Sheshet and Duran.—Moses and Judah Minz.
—Jacob Weil, Israel Isserlein, Maharil.—David
Abi Zimra.—Joseph Karo.—Jair Bacharach.—
Chacham Zevi.—Jacob Emden.—Ezekiel Landau.

THE religious literature of the Jews, so far as practical life was concerned, culminated in the publication of the "Table Prepared" (*Shulchan Aruch*), in 1565. The first book of its kind compiled after the invention of printing, the *Shulchan Aruch* obtained a popularity denied to all previous works designed to present a digest of Jewish ethics and ritual observances. It in no sense superseded the "Strong Hand" of Maimonides, but it was so much more practical in its scope, so much clearer as a work of general refer-

ence, so much fuller of *Minhag*, or established custom, that it speedily became the universal hand-book of Jewish life in many of its phases. It was not accepted in all its parts, and its blemishes were clearly perceived. The author, Joseph Karo, was too tender to the past, and admitted some things which had a historical justification, but which Karo himself would have been the first to reject as principles of conduct for his own or later times. On the whole, the book was a worthy summary of the fundamental Jewish view, that religion is co-extensive with life, and that everything worth doing at all ought to be done in accordance with a general principle of obedience to the divine will. The defects of such a view are the defects of its qualities.

The Shulchan Aruch was the outcome of centuries of scholarship. It was original, yet it was completely based on previous works. In particular the "Four Rows"

(*Arbäa Turim*) of Jacob Asheri (1283-1340) was one of the main sources of Karo's work. The "Four Rows," again, owed everything to Jacob's father, Asher, the son of Yechiel, who migrated from Germany to Toledo at the very beginning of the fourteenth century. But besides the systematic codes of his predecessors, Karo was able to draw on a vast mass of literature on the Talmud and on Jewish Law, accumulated in the course of centuries.

There was, in the first place, a large collection of "Novelties" (*Chiddushim*), or Notes on the Talmud, by various authorities. More significant, however, were the "Responses" (*Teshuboth*), which resembled those of the Gaonim referred to in an earlier chapter. The Rabbinical Correspondence, in the form of Responses to Questions sent from far and near, covered the whole field of secular and religious knowledge. The style of these "Re-

sponses " was at first simple, terse, and full of actuality. The most famous representatives of this form of literature after the Gaonim were both of the thirteenth century, Solomon, the son of Adereth, in Spain, and Meir of Rothenburg in Germany. Solomon, the son of Adereth, of Barcelona, was a man whose moral earnestness, mild yet firm disposition, profound erudition, and tolerant character, won for him a supreme place in Jewish life for half a century. Meir of Rothenburg was a poet and martyr as well as a profound scholar. He passed many years in prison rather than yield to the rapacious demands of the local government for a ransom, which Meir's friends would willingly have paid. As a specimen of Meir's poetry, the following verses are taken from a dirge composed by him in 1285, when copies of the Pentateuch were publicly committed to the flames. The "Law" is addressed in the second person:

Dismay hath seized upon my soul; how then
Can food be sweet to me?
When, O thou Law! I have beheld base men
Destroying thee?

Ah! sweet 'twould be unto mine eyes alway
Waters of tears to pour,
To sob and drench thy sacred robes, till they
Could hold no more.

But lo! my tears are dried, when, fast outpoured,
They down my cheeks are shed,
Scorched by the fire within, because thy Lord
Hath turned and sped.

Yea, I am desolate and sore bereft,
Lo! a forsaken one,
Like a sole beacon on a mountain left,
A tower alone.

I hear the voice of singers now no more,
Silence their song hath bound,
For broken are the strings on harps of yore,
Viols of sweet sound.

I am astonished that the day's fair light
Yet shineth brilliantly
On all things; but is ever dark as night
To me and thee.

.
Even as when thy Rock afflicted thee,
He will assuage thy woe,
And turn again the tribes' captivity,
And raise the low.

Yet shalt thou wear thy scarlet raiment choice,
And sound the timbrels high,
And glad amid the dancers shalt rejoice,
With joyful cry.

My heart shall be uplifted on the day
Thy Rock shall be thy light,
When he shall make thy gloom to pass away,
Thy darkness bright.

This combination of the poetical with the legal mind was paralleled by other combinations in such masters of "Responses" as the Sheshet and Duran families in Algiers in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In these men depth of learning was associated with width of culture. Others, such as Moses and Judah Minz, Jacob Weil, and Israel Isserlein, whose influence was paramount in Germany in the fifteenth century, were less cultivated, but their learning was associated with a geniality and sense of humor that make their "Responses" very human and very entertaining. There is the same homely, affectionate air in the collection

of *Minhagim*, or Customs, known as the *Maharil*, which belongs to the same period. On the other hand, David Abi Zimra, Rabbi of Cairo in the sixteenth century, was as independent as he was learned. It was he, for instance, who abolished the old custom of dating Hebrew documents from the Seleucid era (311 B. C. E.). And, to pass beyond the time of Karo, the writers of "Responses" include the gifted Jair Chayim Bacharach (seventeenth century), a critic as well as a legalist; Chacham Zevi and Jacob Emden in Amsterdam, and Ezekiel Landau in Prague, the former two of whom opposed the Messianic claims of Sabbatai Zevi, and the last of whom was an antagonist to the Germanizing tendency of Moses Mendelssohn.

Joseph Karo himself was a man of many parts. He was born in Spain in 1488, and died in Safed, the nest of mysticism, in 1575. Master of the Talmudic writings of his predecessors from his youth, Karo devoted

thirty-two years to the preparation of an exhaustive commentary on the "Four Rows" of Jacob Asheri. This occupied him from 1522 to 1554. Karo was an enthusiast as well as a student, and the emotional side of the Kabbala had much fascination for him. He believed that he had a familiar, or *Maggid*, the personification of the Mishnah, who appeared to him in dreams, and held communion with him. He found a congenial home in Safed, where the mystics had their head-quarters in the sixteenth century. Karo's companion on his journey to Safed was Solomon Alkabets, author of the famous Sabbath hymn "Come, my Friend" (*Lecha Dodi*), with the refrain:

Come forth, my friend, the Bride to meet,
Come, O my friend, the Sabbath greet!

The Shulchan Aruch is arranged in four parts, called fancifully, "Path of Life" (*Orach Chayim*), "Teacher of Knowl-

edge" (*Yoreh Deah*), "Breastplate of Judgment" (*Choshen ha-Mishpat*), and "Stone of Help" (*Eben ha-Ezer*). The first part is mainly occupied with the subject of prayer, benedictions, the Sabbath, the festivals, and the observances proper to each. The second part deals with food and its preparation, *Shechitah*, or slaughtering of animals for food, the relations between Jews and non-Jews, vows, respect to parents, charity, and religious observances connected with agriculture, such as the payment of tithes, and, finally, the rites of mourning. This section of the *Shulchan Aruch* is the most miscellaneous of the four; in the other three the association of subjects is more logical. The *Eben ha-Ezer* treats of the laws of marriage and divorce from their civil and religious aspects. The *Choshen ha-Mishpat* deals with legal procedure, the laws regulating business transactions and the relations between man and man in the conduct of

worldly affairs. A great number of commentaries on Karo's Code were written by and for the *Acharonim* (= later scholars). It fully deserved this attention, for on its own lines the Shulchan Aruch was a masterly production. It brought system into the discordant opinions of the Rabbinical authorities of the Middle Ages, and its publication in the sixteenth century was itself a stroke of genius. Never before had such a work been so necessary as then. The Jews were in sight of what was to them the darkest age, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Though the Shulchan Aruch had an evil effect in stereotyping Jewish religious thought and in preventing the rapid spread of the critical spirit, yet it was a rallying point for the disorganized Jews, and saved them from the disintegration which threatened them. The Shulchan Aruch was the last great bulwark of the Rabbinical conception of life. Alike in its form and contents it was a not unworthy

close to the series of codes which began with the Mishnah, and in which life itself was codified.

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CHAPTER XXIV

AMSTERDAM IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Manasseh ben Israel.—Baruch Spinoza.—The Drama in Hebrew.—Moses Zacut, Joseph Felix Penso, Moses Chayim Luzzatto.

HOLLAND was the centre of Jewish hope in the seventeenth century, and among its tolerant and cultivated people the Marranos, exiled from Spain and Portugal, founded a new Jerusalem. Two writers of Marrano origin, wide as the poles asunder in gifts of mind and character, represented two aspects of the aspiration of the Jews towards a place in the wider world. Manasseh ben Israel (1604-1657) was an enthusiast who based his ambitious hopes on the Messianic prophecies; Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) lacked enthusiasm, had little belief in the verbal promises of Scripture, yet developed a system of ethics in which

God filled the world. Manasseh ben Israel regained for the Jews admission to England; Spinoza reclaimed the right of a Jew to a voice in the philosophy of the world. Both were political thinkers who maintained the full rights of the individual conscience, and though the arguments used vary considerably, yet Manasseh ben Israel's splendid *Vindiciæ Judeorum* and Spinoza's "Tractate" alike insist on the natural right of men to think freely. They anticipated some of the greatest principles that won acceptance at the end of the eighteenth century.

Manasseh ben Israel was born in Lisbon of Marrano parents, who emigrated to Amsterdam a few years after their son's birth. He displayed a youthful talent for oratory, and was a noted preacher in his teens. He started the first Hebrew printing-press established in Amsterdam, and from it issued many works still remarkable for the excellence of their type and general work-

manship. Manasseh was himself, not only a distinguished linguist, but a popularizer of linguistic studies. He wrote well in Hebrew, Latin, English, Spanish, and Portuguese, and was the means of instructing many famous Christians of the day in Hebrew and Rabbinic. Among his personal friends were Vossius, who translated Manasseh's "Conciliator" from Spanish into Latin. This, the most important of Manasseh's early writings, was as popular with Christians as with Jews, for it attempted to reconcile the discrepancies and contradictions apparent in the Bible. Another of his friends was the painter Rembrandt, who, in 1636, etched the portrait of Manasseh. Huet and Grotius were also among the friends and disciples who gathered round the Amsterdam Rabbi.

An unexpected result of Manasseh ben Israel's zeal for the promotion of Hebrew studies among his own brethren was the rise of a new form of poetical literature.

The first dramas in Hebrew belong to this period. Moses Zacut and Joseph Felix Penso wrote Hebrew dramas in the first half of the seventeenth century in Amsterdam. The "Foundation of the World" by the former and the "Captives of Hope" by the latter possess little poetical merit, but they are interesting signs of the desire of Jews to use Hebrew for all forms of literary art. Hence these dramas were hailed as tokens of Jewish revival. Strangely enough, the only great writer of Hebrew plays, Moses Chayim Luzzatto (1707-1747), was also resident in Amsterdam. Luzzatto wrote under the influence of the Italian poet Guarini. His metres, his long soliloquies, his lyrics, his dovetailing of rural and urban scenery, are all directly traceable to Guarini. Luzzatto was nevertheless an original poet. His mastery of Hebrew was complete, and his rich fancy was expressed in glowing lines. His dramas, "Samson," the "Strong Tower,"

and "Glory to the Virtuous," show classical refinement and freshness of touch, which have made them the models of all subsequent efforts of Hebrew dramatists.

Manasseh ben Israel did not allow himself to become absorbed in the wider interests opened out to him by his intimacy with the greatest Christian scholars of his day. He prepared a Spanish translation of the Pentateuch for the Amsterdam Jews, who were slow to adopt Dutch as their speech, a fact not wonderful when it is remembered that literary Dutch was only then forming. Manasseh also wrote at this period a Hebrew treatise on immortality. His worldly prosperity was small, and he even thought of emigrating to Brazil. But the friends of the scholar found a post for him in a new college for the study of Hebrew, a college to which it is probable that Spinoza betook himself. In the meantime the reports of Montesinos as to the presence of the Lost Ten Tribes in Amer-

ica turned the current of Manasseh's life. In 1650 he wrote his famous essay, the "Hope of Israel," which he dedicated to the English Parliament. He argued that, as a preliminary to the restoration of Israel, or the millennium, for which the English Puritans were eagerly looking, the dispersion of Israel must be complete. The hopes of the millennium were doomed to disappointment unless the Jews were readmitted to England, "the isle of the Northern Sea." His dedication met with a friendly reception, Manasseh set out for England in 1655, and obtained from Cromwell a qualified consent to the resettlement of the Jews in the land from which they had been expelled in 1290.

The pamphlets which Manasseh published in England deserve a high place in literature and in the history of modern thought. They are immeasurably superior to his other works, which are eloquent but diffuse, learned but involved. But in

his *Vindiciæ Judeorum* (1656) his style and thought are clear, original, elevated. There are here no mystic irrelevancies. His remarks are to the point, sweetly reasonable, forcible, moderate. He grapples with the medieval prejudices against the Jews in a manner which places his works among the best political pamphlets ever written. Morally, too, his manner is noteworthy. He pleads for Judaism in a spirit equally removed from arrogance and self-abasement. He is dignified in his persuasiveness. He appeals to a sense of justice rather than mercy, yet he writes as one who knows that justice is the rarest and highest quality of human nature; as one who knows that humbly to express gratitude for justice received is to do reverence to the noblest faculty of man.

Fate rather than disposition tore Manasseh from his study to plead before the English Parliament. Baruch Spinoza was spared such distraction. Into his self-

contained life the affairs of the world could effect no entry. It is not quite certain whether Spinoza was born in Amsterdam. He must, at all events, have come there in his early youth. He may have been a pupil of Manasseh, but his mind was nurtured on the philosophical treatises of Maimonides and Crescas. His thought became sceptical, and though he was "intoxicated with a sense of God," he had no love for any positive religion. He learned Latin, and found new avenues opened to him in the writings of Descartes. His associations with the representatives of the Cartesian philosophy and his own indifference to ceremonial observances brought him into collision with the Synagogue, and, in 1656, during the absence of Manasseh in England, Spinoza was excommunicated by the Amsterdam Rabbis. Spinoza was too strong to seek the weak revenge of an abjuration of Judaism. He went on quietly earning a living as a maker of

lenses; he refused a professorship, preferring, like Maimonides before him, to rely on other than literary pursuits as a means of livelihood.

In 1670 Spinoza finished his "Theologico-Political Tractate," in which some bitterness against the Synagogue is apparent. His attack on the Bible is crude, but the fundamental principles of modern criticism are here anticipated. The main importance of the "Tractate" lay in the doctrine that the state has full rights over the individual, except in relation to freedom of thought and free expression of thought. These are rights which no human being can alienate to the state. Of Spinoza's greatest work, the "Ethics," it need only be said that it was one of the most stimulating works of modern times. A child of Judaism and of Cartesianism, Spinoza won a front place among the great teachers of mankind.

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CHAPTER XXV

MOSES MENDELSSOHN

Mendelssohn's German Translation of the Bible.—
Phædo.—Jerusalem.—Lessing's "Nathan the
Wise."

MOSES, the son of Mendel, was born in Dessau in 1728, and died in Berlin in 1786. His father was poor, and he himself was of a weak constitution. But his stunted form was animated by a strenuous spirit. After a boyhood passed under conditions which did little to stimulate his dawning aspirations, Mendelssohn resolved to follow his teacher Fränkel to Berlin. He trudged the whole way on foot, and was all but refused admission into the Prussian capital, where he was destined to produce so profound an impression. In Berlin his struggle with poverty continued, but his condition was

improved when he obtained a post, first as private tutor, then as book-keeper in a silk factory.

Berlin was at this time the scene of an intellectual and æsthetic revival dominated by Frederick the Great. The latter, a dilettante in culture, was, as Mendelssohn said of him, a man "who made the arts and sciences flourish, and made liberty of thought universal in his realm." The German Jews were as yet outside this revival. In Italy and Holland the new movements of the seventeenth and the eighteenth century had found Jews well to the fore. But the "German" Jews—and this term included the great bulk of the Jews of Europe—were suffering from the effects of intellectual stagnation. The Talmud still exercised the mind and imagination of these Jews, but culture and religion were separated. Mendelssohn in a hundred places contends that such separation is dangerous and unnatural. It was his service to Juda-

ism that he made the separation once for all obsolete.

Mendelssohn effected this by purely literary means. Most reformatations have been at least aided by moral and political forces. But the Mendelssohnian revival in Judaism was a literary revival, in which moral and religious forces had only an indirect influence. By the aid of greater refinement of language, for hitherto the "German" Jews had not spoken pure German; by a widening of the scope of education in the Jewish schools; by the introduction of all that is known as culture, Mendelssohn changed the whole aspect of Jewish life. And he produced this reformation by books and by books alone. Never playing the part of a religious or moral reformer, Mendelssohn became the Jewish apostle of culture.

The great event of his life occurred in 1754, when he made the acquaintance of Lessing. The two young men became

constant friends. Lessing, before he knew Mendelssohn, had written a drama, "The Jews," in which, perhaps for the first time, a Jew was represented on the stage as a man of honor. In Mendelssohn, Lessing recognized a new Spinoza; in Lessing, Mendelssohn saw the perfect ideal of culture. The masterpiece of Lessing's art, the drama "Nathan the Wise," was the monument of this friendship. Mendelssohn was the hero of the drama, and the toleration which it breathes is clearly Mendelssohn's. Mendelssohn held that there was no absolutely best religion any more than there was an absolutely best form of government. This was the leading idea of his last work, "Jerusalem"; it is also the central thought of "Nathan the Wise." The best religion, according to both, is the religion which best brings out the individual's noblest faculties. As Mendelssohn wrote, there are certain eternal truths which God implants in all men alike, but "Judaism

boasts of no exclusive revelation of immutable truths indispensable to salvation."

What has just been quoted is one of the last utterances of Mendelssohn. We must retrace our steps to the date of his first intimacy with Lessing. He devoted his attention to the perfecting of his German style, and succeeded so well that his writings have gained a place among the classics of German literature. In 1763, he won the Berlin prize for an essay on Mathematical Method in Philosophical Reasoning, and defeated Kant entirely on account of his lucid and attractive style. Mendelssohn's most popular philosophical work, "*Phædo*, or the Immortality of the Soul," won extraordinary popularity in Berlin, as much for its attractive form as for its spiritual charms. The "*German Plato*," the "*Jewish Socrates*," were some of the epithets bestowed on him by multitudes of admirers. Indeed, the "*Phædo*" of Mendelssohn is a work of rare beauty.

One of the results of Mendelssohn's popularity was a curious correspondence with Lavater. The latter perceived in Mendelssohn's toleration signs of weakness, and believed that he could convert the famous Jew to Christianity. Mendelssohn's reply, like his "Jerusalem" and his admirable preface to a German translation of Manasseh ben Israel's *Vindiciæ Judeorum*, gave voice to that claim on personal liberty of thought and conscience for which the Jews, unconsciously, had been so long contending. Mendelssohn's view was that all true religious aspirations are independent of religious forms. Mendelssohn did not ignore the value of forms, but he held that as there are often several means to the same end, so the various religious forms of the various creeds may all lead their respective adherents to salvation and to God.

Mendelssohn's most epoch-making work was his translation of the Pentateuch into German. With this work the present his-

tory finds a natural close. Mendelssohn's Pentateuch marks the modernization of the literature of Judaism. There was much opposition to the book, but on the other hand many Jews eagerly scanned its pages, acquired its noble diction, and committed its rhythmic eloquence to their hearts. Round Mendelssohn there clustered a band of devoted disciples, the pioneers of the new learning, the promoters of a literature of Judaism, in which the modern spirit re-animated the still living records of antiquity. There was certainly some weakness among the men and women affected by the Berlin philosopher, for some discarded all positive religion, because the master had taught that all positive religions had their saving and truthful elements.

It is not, however, the province of this sketch to trace the religious effects of the Mendelssohnian movement. Suffice it to say that, while the old Jewish conception had been that literature and life are co-

extensive, Jewish literature begins with Mendelssohn to have an independent life of its own, a life of the spirit, which cannot be altogether controlled by the tribulations of material life. A physical Ghetto may once more be imposed on the Jews from without; an intellectual Ghetto imposed from within is hardly conceivable. Tolerance gave the modern spirit to Jewish literature, but intolerance cannot withdraw it.

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